

# **Ecological Framework for the Restoration of the Salton Sea**

**by  
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# The Salton Sea

- Is an ephemeral feature of the environment.
- It is Not an Old Growth Forest or a Coral Reef
- In Pliocene time (8 million years ago), the Gulf of California flooded the Salton Trough
- The Colorado River, over time, deposited sediment which cut off the Salton Sea
- The Salton Sea was flooded several times only to dry up again during the last million years





**Periodically,  
The Salton Sea  
Trough Has  
Flooded,  
Most  
Recently  
in 1905**

# The Salton Sea

- Prior to Damming the Colorado River, the Delta was a Rich and Varied Ecosystem, Attractive to a Large Variety of Fish and Wildfowl
- Today the Delta is Severely Compromised, but the Cienega de Santa Clara has Replaced some of the Delta's Traditional Function: It is the Area's "Field of Dreams"
- The Cienega de Santa Clara is an Accident of History and Could Easily Disappear
- We have an Opportunity Today to Permanently Replace these Ecological Functions with a Restored Salton Sea



# The Salton Sea

- **These Ecological Functions are:**
  - **A Biologically Productive Feeding and Resting Ground for Neotropical Migrant Birds**
  - **A Diverse Habitat Attractive to a Large Variety of Wildlife**
  - **350 miles of Shoreline Littoral Environment Produced by the Cascade Concept, Compared with 80 Miles today**
  - **A Treatment Wetland for Introduced Environmental Contaminants**
  - **An Aesthetically Attractive Ecosystem Which Will Encourage Ecologically Responsible Recreation**





## **The Salton Sea Trough**

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**Today the  
Trough is  
Home to  
Over 1  
Million  
People on  
Both Sides  
of the  
Border**



# But the Delta is Now Cut Off



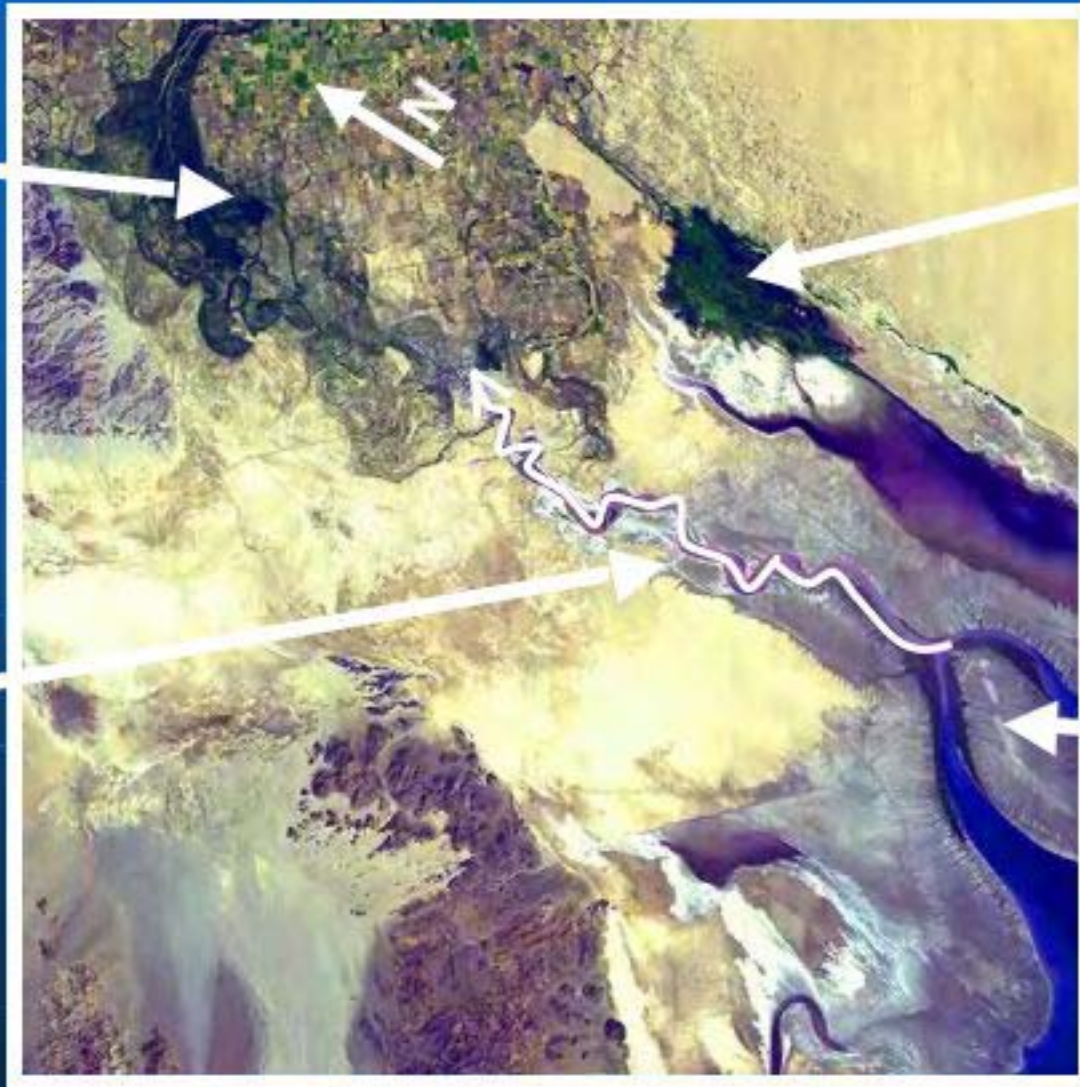
# Colorado River Delta

Modern  
Colorado  
River  
Mouth

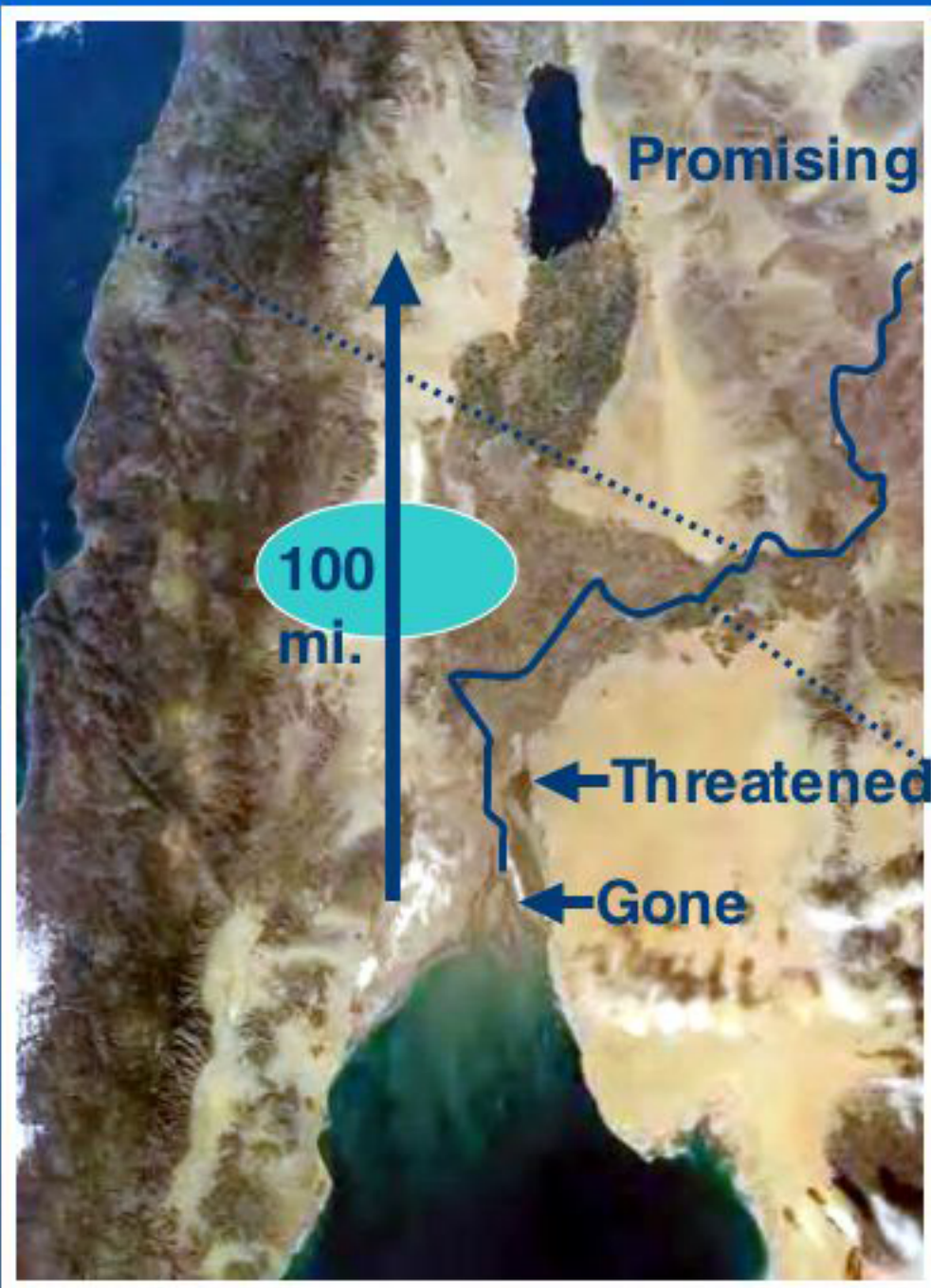
Cienega de  
Santa Clara

Reverse  
Tidal  
Flow

Isla  
Montague







**We have the  
Opportunity  
To Move the  
Lost Delta  
Ecosystem  
100 miles  
North to the  
Salton Sea**

**If Anything is Clear to us Today,  
It is the Principle that Planning  
For the Best Environmental End  
Leads, in the Long Run, to the  
Best Social and Economic Result  
And Makes Good Business Sense**



**Because Enhanced Environmental Quality  
Will have a Positive Impact on the Region  
as a Place to Live, Visit and Do Business.  
That, in turn, will Create a Healthier and  
More Diverse Economy for the Region for  
Decades into the Future**



*"Dawn on the Delta was whistled in by Gambel quail, which roosted in the mesquites overhanging camp. When the sun peeped over the Sierra Madres, it slanted across a hundred miles of lovely desolation, a vast bowl of wilderness rimmed by jagged peaks. On the map the Delta was bisected by the river, but the river was nowhere and everywhere, for he could not decide which of a hundred green lagoons offered the most pleasant and least speedy path to the Gulf. So he traveled them all, and so did we. He divided and rejoined, he twisted and turned, he meandered in awesome jungles, he all but ran in circles, he dallied with lovely groves, he got lost and was glad of it, and so were we....A verdant smell of mesquite and willow separated the channel from the thorny desert beyond. At each bend we saw egrets standing in the pools ahead, each white statue matched by its white reflection. Fleets of cormorants drove their black prows in quest of skittering mullets; avocets, willets, and yellow-legs dozed one-legged on the bars; mallards, widgeons, and teal sprang skyward in alarm. As the birds took the air, they accumulated in a small cloud ahead, there to settle, or to break back to our rear. When a group of egrets settled on a far green willow, they looked like a premature snowstorm....What matters is that we were sharing our wilderness with the wildest of living fowl. We and they had found a common home in the remote vastness of space and time; we were both back in the Pleistocene."*

**Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac, 1949.**